

**A HANDBOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS:  
SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE  
RESIDENT AND MIGRATORY SPECIES IN  
THE BRITISH ISLANDS, WITH AN INDEX TO  
THE RECORDS OF THE RARER VISITANTS**

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A handbook of British birds: showing the distribution of the resident and migratory species in the British islands, with an index to the records of the rarer visitants by J. E. Harting

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AN INDEX TO THE RECORDS OF THE RARER VISITANTS.

BY

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## INTRODUCTION.

THOSE who are acquainted with the works of Bewick, Montagu, Jardine, Selby, Macgillivray, Yarrell, and Gould, without having made a special study of their contents, may well be excused for doubting whether a further publication on the subject of British Birds can be either desirable or necessary.

Practical ornithologists, however, who may take up this Handbook will see in it an attempt to supply a want which, notwithstanding the admirable works above referred to, they must have frequently experienced\*; for in two important respects, at least, do these fail to satisfy their requirements: they do not distinguish with sufficient clearness the species which are truly indigenous to Great Britain from those which are but rare and accidental visitants; nor do they indicate with sufficient authority the scientific nomenclature which should be adopted for the species of which they take cognizance.

Without attention to the first of these points, it is impossible to form any thing like a correct estimate of the character of the British avifauna; while to neglect the second is to perpetuate error, and to render perplexing that which should always be simple and intelligible.

\* Cf. Alston, 'Zoologist,' 1833, p. 453.

To supply these particular necessities is the object of the present work ; and on this account no attempt has been made to travel beyond the limits indicated by giving descriptions of the species or dilating upon their haunts, habits, seasonal changes of plumage, migrations, or geographical distribution. These and many other details may be derived from the sources above mentioned, and will doubtless be worked out more fully and more satisfactorily than ever in the forthcoming new edition of Yarrell's work, for which English naturalists are anxiously expectant.

Under these circumstances it is hoped that this Handbook will be regarded not in any sense as intended to rival or supplant existing or forthcoming text-books on the subject, but to assist students in a manner and to an extent which has not been contemplated in the works referred to. The claims of species to rank as British, the proper scientific names which each should bear, the *habitat* of the rarer visitants, and the frequency or otherwise of their occurrence are points to which attention is almost exclusively directed in the following pages. To obtain accurate and reliable details upon these points no labour has been spared, no source of information neglected ; and although it is not pretended that no errors have escaped detection, yet it is believed that upon investigation these will be found to be but few and comparatively unimportant. In a great measure this must be said to be due to the assistance which the author has derived from his friends and fellow workers in the field of ornithology during the time that the work has been in progress ; and on this account his thanks are especially due to Professor Newton, Mr. J. H. Gurney, Mr. J. H. Gurney, jun., Mr. Stevenson, and Mr. Robert Gray, all of whom have cooperated, at no inconsiderable expenditure of time and trouble, in replying to numerous inquiries, and furnishing important information. It is need-



less to say that through their kind assistance in revising the details now presented to the reader, a greater accuracy has been ensured than could possibly have been the case had the author relied solely upon his own efforts.

The results which follow from a consideration of these details are both curious and instructive.

When the late Mr. Yarrell, in 1856, published the third edition of his 'History of British Birds,' he enumerated 352 species which he considered had more or less claim to be included in the British list. Since that time no less than 47 others have been added\*, so that the total number of species at present recognized as occurring in Great Britain should be 399; but leaving out four of those noticed by Yarrell—viz. *Cygnus olor*, a domesticated species, *Uria ringvia* (p. 74) and *Larus capistratus* (p. 175), which are mere varieties, and *Alca impennis*, now believed to be extinct—the corrected total arrived at is 395.

Of these, in round numbers, 130 are Residents, 100 Periodical Migrants, and 30 Annual Visitants, the remainder being Rare and Accidental Visitants. And here it may be well, in order to avoid future misunderstanding, to define the terms which have just been employed.

As RESIDENTS are included those species which rear their

\* These are:—*Falco islandicus*, *Astur atricapillus*, *Milvus migrans*, *Buteo lineatus*, *Nyctale acadica*, *Lanius minor*, *Muscicapa parva*, *Vireosylva olivacea*, *Turdus atrigularis*, *T. sibiricus*, *Salicaria palustris*, *S. aquatica*, *Regulus calendula*, *Motacilla cinereocapilla*, *Anthus spinoletta*, *A. campestris*, *A. cervinus*, *A. ludovicianus*, *Alanda calandra*, *A. sibirica*, *Emberiza pusilla*, *E. rustica*, *E. melanocephala*, *Fringilla serinus*, *Carpodacus erythrinus*, *Sturnella magna*, *Picus medius*, *P. villosus*, *P. pubescens*, *P. auratus*, *Cuculus erythrophthalmus*, *Hirundo bicolor*, *Cypselus caudatus*, *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, *Syrnaptus paradoxus*, *Egialitis vociferus*, *Totanus solitarius*, *Gallinago wilsoni*, *Grus virgo*, *G. pavonina*, *Crex carolina*, *Cygnus americanus*, *C. buccinator*, *Anser albatrus*, *Sterna velox*, *Larus ichthyætes*, and *Larus melanocephalus*.

young annually in the British Islands, and are to be found in some part or other of the United Kingdom *throughout the year*. Of these many are partially migratory, as, for instance, *Falco aesalon*, *F. tinnunculus*, *Otus brachyotus*, *Turdus musicus*, *T. torquatus*, *Regulus cristatus*, *Motacilla yarrellii*, *Linota cannabina*, *L. flavirostris*, *L. rufescens*, *Columba palumbus*, *C. aenas*, *Charadrius plumbealis*, *Ægialitis hiaticula*, *Tringa alpina*, *Scolopax rusticola*, *Gallinago media*, and others. Nevertheless, as specimens of all may be obtained in some locality or other during every month in the year, they may be regarded for all practical purposes as residents.

PERIODICAL MIGRANTS are those which visit us annually and regularly at particular seasons, and whose advent and departure may be dated in advance with considerable precision. Of these we have familiar examples in *Luscinia philomela*, *Cuculus canorus*, and the *Hirundines*, which come here for the summer, and *Turdus iliacus* and *T. pilaris*, which spend the winter with us; while others, like most of the *Tringidæ*, perform a double migration and pass through the country twice a year, viz. in spring and autumn.

THE ANNUAL VISITANTS comprise those which occur in some part of the British Islands annually, but comparatively in very limited numbers and at irregular and uncertain intervals. The month in which some or one of them may be expected may be named; but the uncertainty of their arrival in any particular county precludes their being placed with the Periodical Migrants. Amongst these may be mentioned *Oriolus galbula*, *Regulus ignicapillus*, *Ampelis garrulus*, *Emberiza lapponica*, *Linota linaria*, *Pastor roseus*, *Upupa epops*, *Coracias garrula*, *Merops apiaster*, *Recurvirostra avacetta*, *Ciconia alba*, *Grus cinerea*, *Anas strepera*, *Ædemia fusca*, *Sterna dongallii*, and *Larus minutus*.

Of the Residents, which, as above mentioned, may be

reckoned at 130 or thereabouts, 13 are not found in Ireland, and 9 are either unknown or extremely rare in Scotland. Those excluded from Ireland are :—*Sylvia undata*, *Sitta cæsia*, *Parus cristatus*, *Panurus biarmicus*, *Emberiza cirrus*, *Picus viridis*, *P. minor*, *Columba æneas*, *Tetrao tetrix*, *T. lagopus*, *Perdix rufa*, *Crex pusilla*, and *C. bailloni*.

Those unknown, or very rare, in Scotland are :—*Sylvia undata*, *Panurus biarmicus*, *Sitta cæsia*, *Parus palustris*, *Emberiza cirrus*, *Picus viridis*, *P. minor*, *Crex pusilla*, and *Crex bailloni*.

Out of 100 Periodical Migrants, the great majority of which come to us from the south, 10 do not reach Ireland, viz. *Lanius collurio*, *Muscicapa atricapilla*, *Salicaria arundinacea* (Linn.), *S. strepera*, *S. luscinioides*, *Luscinia philomela*, *Sylvia sylvicola*, *Motacilla flava*, *Anthus arboreus*, *Jynx torquilla*; while 8 others are of but rare occurrence there, viz. *Falco subbuteo*, *Raticilla tithys*, *Sylvia atricapilla*, *S. hortensis*, *Phyllopneuste sibilatrix*, *Eudromias morinellus*, *Ægialitis cantianus*, and *Tringa temminckii*. In Scotland 10 also are never, or very rarely, met with, viz. *R. tithys*, *S. arundinacea* (Linn.), *S. strepera*, *S. luscinioides*, *L. philomela*, *S. atricapilla*, *S. sylvicola*, *Motacilla flava*, *Jynx torquilla*, and *Turtur auritus*.

With regard to Annual Visitants, Ireland is not visited by 8 or 9 which find their way to England, as *Regulus ignicapillus*, *Parus cristatus*, *Anthus richardi*, *Alauda alpestris*, *Emberiza lapponica*, *E. hortulana*, *Linota linaria*, and *Phalaropus hyperboreus*; while in Scotland *Anthus richardi* has not been observed, and *Coracias garrula* and *Merops apiaster* are admitted to be of very rare occurrence. Ireland does not possess any characteristic birds as is the case with Scotland; and the only species which have been found in the sister isle and not in England belong to the rare and accidental visitants, of which mention will be made hereafter. In Scotland, on the